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# The Reformed Journal

A PERIODICAL OF REFORMED COMMENT AND OPINION

*Ten Years of the Journal; Tributes* — EDITORS
*The Positive Mind* — HENRY STOB
*Theology in the Sixties* — JAMES DAANE
*A Decade of Growing Pains* — GEORGE STOB
*Mission Work Today* — HARRY R. BOER
*Barabbas* — MILDRED ZYLSTRA
*Responses to Easter* — STEVE VAN DER WEELE

## *Tenth Anniversary Issue*

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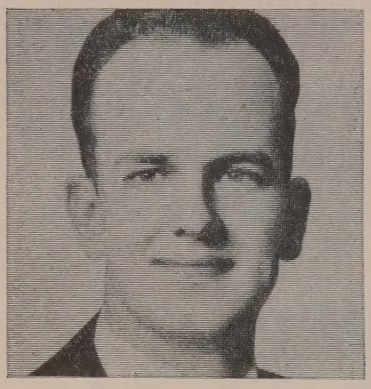

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*Editorial Board*

HENRY STOB, HARRY R. BOER, JAMES DAANE, LESTER DEKOSTER, GEORGE STOB

*Publisher*

William B. Eerdmans, Sr.

RESPONSES TO EASTER

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MISSION WORK TODAY

Harry R. Boer, *Christian Reformed Church Missionary, Theological College of Northern Nigeria*

BARABBAS, A BOOK REVIEW

Mildred Zylstra, *Acting Reference Librarian, Calvin College*

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# *Responses to* Easter

T IS REWARDING FOR CHRISTIANS TO xamine how people first responded to ie resurrection of our Lord. Some of ie responses, of course, are so closely elated to the event itself, and are so itegrally a part of the resurrection arrative, that they can never be dupli-ated — as, for example, the experience f Mary and the disciples. Other re-ponses, however, form the pattern of ays in which mankind has always re-arded Christ's exit from the tomb. onsider Judas, for example. He is the rototype of all those impenitents who e overcome by an excruciating sense alienation and rejection, and for hom the resurrection holds out no ope. The chief priests and Jews were id losers. All their efforts to end sus' miracles had but led to this great-t of all miracles — His own conquest death. What must have infuriated em beyond the point of endurance as that they remembered — better than e disciples — that Jesus had predicted is resurrection. And so in despera-on they bought off the soldiers, with arge money." These rulers are typi-l of people for whom a liberal the-ogian spoke when he said, "There is event in the whole of Scripture so ell documented as the resurrection; ere is likewise no event which I am s willing to believe." The Sadducees ve their modern counterparts in veral of the crisis theologians who e too sophisticated to believe that rist arose from the tomb. And then ere are, of course, the throngs, whose itudes ranged and still range from difference to embarrassment, from itation to cynicism, from disbelief hostility.

R BELIEVERS THROUGHOUT THE CEN-ries, the cross has always been ex-ined in the light of the empty tomb. e resurrection has been the event ich has seemed most dramatically to spond to the human situation. It was e resurrection, and the hope of eternal e it offered, which became central in e message of the early Church. And e Church has always, at its best, kept proper relationship the Lord who

(*Continued on page* 21)

# As We See It

## TEN YEARS OF THE JOURNAL

THIS ISSUE MARKS THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE *Reformed Journal.* IT is appropriate that we should take notice of the fact, and that the material offered in this issue should bear the imprint of its recognition.

The fact that the *Journal* has been able to appear regularly for a decade is noteworthy from several points of view. The history of independent magazine publication is not one to encourage new efforts. Papers have come and gone, with many sharing the feeling that they ought not to have appeared in the first place. Official church publications, many feel, are all we need for intra-church discussion. We of the *Journal* have felt, and feel now as strongly as ever, that there is not only room but need for both the official papers and the independent.

Perhaps no one is more surprised than the editors themselves that we may celebrate a whole decade of existence. When the venture was launched, four of the five editors lived in Grand Rapids and frequent consultation and planning was possible. Since then one on whom we relied heavily for guidance, contributions, and spirit has been called out of this life, another has come to reside in New Jersey, still another is in this country only on missionary furlough; only two editors are now resident in Grand Rapids, another has from the beginning lived in California. The burden of management now rests almost entirely on the two Grand Rapids men. They are, however, loyally and effectively helped by the Eerdmans Publishing Company staff. That in this situation we could nevertheless retain continuity in policy and in spirit is occasion for deep gratitude to God.

When it first appeared, the *Journal* had to be written almost exclusively by members of the editorial staff. There seemed to be a general reluctance to associate with us by appearing in writing in the new publication. The paper was clearly being launched to say some things that weren't being said. Some were not sure just what those things would be, others were quite sure they knew but didn't like it. By this time everyone knows where we stand, and the *Journal* has become an accepted part of the Church's life. Many have found in it an avenue for expression and discussion that would not otherwise have been open to them. The problem the editors face today is not how or where to get copy, but to resist the temptation of letting others do most of the writing.

A glance through the *Journal* issues of the past ten years will reveal that nearly every problem of significance to come before the Christian Reformed Church has been critically dealt with. Many of these problems have come before other churches, and thus the *Journal's* ministry has been extended. When we compare the positions that have been argued in the *Journal* with action taken on them by ecclesiastical assemblies, we are on the whole encouraged and feel that all the effort has been eminently worthwhile. Our central concern has been to help the Church take responsible attitudes to the matters that arise for its consideration. For this reason the *Journal* has been, is now, and with God's help will remain, a spirit, a temper, an outlook, a Reformed voice relevant to our day, and never a propaganda organ to effect particular ends.

One day in a staff meeting Henry Zylstra said in his characteristic way, "Men, we're in business for eighty years." That was his way of saying that we have a job to do that we won't see the end of. As a staff and as a paper we stand for the effectuation in church discussion of the freedom that we have in Christ. That is an ongoing business to which we can contribute but which we can't finish. We count our bondage to Christ

to be our highest liberty. The Reformed mind is the free mind. Christian freedom and reformation are corollaries We who are sons of the revolutionaries of the Reformation would perpetuate in our day the spirit that gave the Reformed tradition its birth. We accept the principle of God's kingdom that the best is always before us, until God shall be all in all. We now re-dedicate ourselves so to think and so to write in the years that lie ahead.

## SCHOLAR, TEACHER . . . H. Z.

THE FAMILIAR INITIALS OF ONE OF THE SMALL GROUP WHO dreamed of this *Journal*, and whose dream was realized, appear in its pages no longer. Henry Zylstra's was a large share of the vision which illuminated the early steps the editors took, and his was much of the inspired fire which kindled and re-kindled the hearts of his colleagues in those early days. These things they poignantly remember at this anniversary season. The sound of voice, flash of eye, quick turn of phrase, ready apprehension and sound analysis, forward and upward look . . . who shall forget these? or cease to regret their early loss?

Gifted with unique powers of expression which he had disciplined to mastery, and dedicated to the application of the Christian faith in his profession, in his life, and in the communities in which he moved, Henry Zylstra made formidable and lasting impression on all who came within range of his voice and pen. This impression, growing still, is living testimony to his pervasive influence.

Moreover, the quality and range of his dedication and the force of its written expression are permanently treasured in the pages of this *Journal* he so much loved; and his *Testament of Vision* has been drawn into a posthumous volume, soon to be reprinted for the third time. His monuments are, therefore, all about us.

With such witnesses loosed in the world, it is both beyond our powers and unnecessary to add to his stature by an anniversary tribute to his memory. The editors, for this reason, only pause once again, as they with his many friends have done oft before and will oft again, to acknowledge his influence, to re-catch his enthusiasm, to face once more — with him — the one Lord we seek to serve as he served. —L.D.K.

## A TRIBUTE

THE FIRST ISSUE OF THE *Reformed Journal* TO SEE THE light of day in March, 1951, was published by the Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. The present issue has been published by the same firm. Between these two issues lie ten years of fruitful co-operation between editors and publisher. The *Reformed Journal* staff counts it a privilege to express at this milestone in its history a word of tribute to the man who has made possible the regular monthly appearance of this paper.

When in the summer of 1950 the editors began to discu plans for the publication of an independent paper, th biggest problem was to find a publisher. If memory serv us right, it was through Dr. Henry Zylstra's connecti with the Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company that t problem was first brought to the attention of Mr. W B. Eerdmans, Sr. There was mutual attraction from t first, and out of the discussions that followed there ensu a sort of compact that we would provide the copy a Mr. Eerdmans would do all the rest. What is involved "all the rest" only those can understand who have so acquaintance with the work that lies between submissi of articles and the depositing of printed copies of magazine in Uncle Sam's postoffice.

While leaving all the writing to the staff and to c tributors, Mr. Eerdmans has been a great deal more us than just a printer. He has been in the finest sense the word our publisher. The facilities of the Eerdma Company printing plant and of its editorial and office st have always been made generously available. Form arrangement, proofreading, circularizing, subscriptions, a mailing lists have been large concerns. Even the edit know only in part all that has gone into these and ot aspects of the *Journal's* monthly appearance. The way which both Mr. Eerdmans and his staff have given their time and knowledge to the *Journal* reflects, we lieve, what we have always considered to be of the esse of its existence: the *Journal* doesn't belong to the edit it doesn't belong to the publisher — it belongs to t Church. To us has been entrusted the stewardship making that belonging as fruitful as possible. It is in t Church and in her well-being that our common serv finds its goal.

As Mr. Eerdmans now moves in the evening of his li physically, spiritually, and mentally active and alert, may look back on a career that has meant much for t Christian Reformed Church and for God's kingdom as whole, both in this country and outside of it. We sh not endeavor to list here all the services he has render We wish simply to note the central service — that duri a span of many years he has been the means through whi hundreds of writers have been able to present their thou to the Christian reading public.

The editors have never been asked to speak "a word fr our sponsor." We do not now speak either from him for him. We do most respectfully and gratefully at t time address a word to him. We thank you, Mr. Eerdma for all you have done for the cause of an understandi and relevant Christianity that we together seek to ser On behalf of the *Journal* and its readers we wish y strength, health, joy, and years, and in all these Go richest blessing, to continue in the service you have long rendered to so many, and very particularly, th past ten years, to us.

# The Positive Mind

*by Henry Stob*

ME TIME AGO I OFFERED IN THESE PAGES A nsideration of what might be called the theologico- nical structure, or the spirituo-moral complexion, our ecclesiastical existence. I suggested that ere are operating in and upon the Church three titudes or mentalities which I called "Minds." ese Minds, though appealing to a common fund Christian truth, are diverse and in polar tension, d they produce on this account periodical "dis- rbances" in the Church. Their presence indicates at the Church has not yet attained to wholeness, t that a process of integration is going on in ich several mentalities are striving for inclusion the whole, and, indeed, for hegemony within it. alled these the Safe, the Militant, and the Positive inds, and hazarded a general characterization of em, of the first two in particular.

The Safe and Militant Minds, though differing certain respects, are basically akin. Both are sentially negative in orientation and thrust; both e generated by fear. They differ only in that fear ctates retreat in the one case and aggression in the her. The Positive Mind is of quite another sort. is generated not by fear, but by love, which casts t fear. It is unlike the Mind of Safety in that it es not counsel hiding behind protective walls, but ges a forward movement into the open. It is un- e the Militant Mind in that it moves outward not th programs of destruction, but with strategems salvation. It differs from both in that it sub- dinates flight and combat to positive redemptive tion.

This Positive Mind is the exclusive possession of individual or group of individuals in the Church. is in fact the Mind which more than any other imates the whole of our communion, and which entirely absent from no single part of it. But is constantly under siege by alien forces, and is sometimes compromised by the unwholesome ars emanating from the safe and militant men- lities attending it. This accounts for the ambigui- es of conduct and witness which can occasionally observed in our official and unofficial acts. Yet is the Mind which, because it faithfully reflects ristianity's true stance and purpose, is recognized the Church as above all her own. It is therefore at which she centrally desires to cultivate and press.

It was in order to articulate this Mind, and ereby to give form and currency to the deepest ntiments of our maturing community, that the itors and publishers launched *The Reformed urnal* ten years ago this month. In the inter- ning years the *Journal* has made every effort to quire, delineate, and commend this Mind. Its forts have not always been successful, for the editors and writers have themselves an imperfect hold upon this Mind and what grasp they have of it sometimes fails, for want of skill or care, to receive adequate embodiment in words. Yet one conscious aim controlled even the most inept performance of the past: the aim to set forth in strict fidelity to Scripture the need for progressive and saving penetration of the world in love; and serviceable thereto, the need for creating in the Church a climate in which such positive and redemptive outreach becomes accredited and acclaimed. The pursuit of this aim involved the *Journal* in the discussion of many current problems and induced it to take positions which not infrequently evoked the censure of those who want the Church above all to be safe and of those as well who want the Church to face the world primarily as combatant. In so far as this censure pertained to aberrations of insight and expression and could be endorsed by other Christians of whatever Mind, it was thankfully received as a good and wholesome corrective; but in so far as it expressed no more than the opposition of safe and militant mentalities to full-orbed positivity, it was regretfully laid aside as unfounded and mistaken, and new attempts were made to clarify and establish the authentic claims of the positive Christian Mind.

What this Mind is, and wherein it differs from the other Minds which challenge it, it is the purpose of this article to inquire.

IT SHOULD BE OBSERVED AT ONCE THAT THE POSITIVE Mind embraces and includes all that is sound and biblical in the mentalities of Militancy and Safety. It does not stand to these in a relation of simple negativity, for it recognizes that these too have not been uninformed by an indispensable, though partial, good. It lays these minds under judgment not because it considers them to have by-passed the Scriptures altogether, but because it believes them to be unbiblically attenuated. What it challenges in these Minds is not their appreciation for certain real, if limited, aspects of the Christian revelation, but the claim they make to have gotten that revelation into focus; it challenges their claim to wholeness. It deplores, not their recognition of the need for security or offensive action, but their habit of regarding the Church primarily as a shelter or the Christian life as primarily a fight. The Positive Mind disputes their implicit claim to absoluteness, but it does not refuse a proper and subordinate place to what in these mentalities is raised to an intolerable preeminence. Whatever hold these have on truth, it shares, though in a different way, and within a different structure.

So, for example, to begin with considerations of

security, a man informed by the Positive Mind will have no quarrel with anyone who asserts that the Christian truth we possess must be carefully guarded, that Christian ways of behavior must be well-defined and circumspect, that the Christian institutions we have established must be preserved, and that all which is holy must be kept from profanation. No Christian can take issue with these statements rightly understood, and the Positive Mind does not encourage anyone to do so. It does, however, insist that they be biblically interpreted and christianly endorsed; it demands that they be placed and read in Scriptural context. When this is done the massive richness of Christianity comes into view and acknowledgment of important complementary truths becomes inescapable. It then becomes the part of Christian wisdom to declare that truth simply preserved serves no purpose beyond that of selfish contemplation, that circumspect behavior can by-pass all the areas where human need is greatest, that time alone modifies all human institutions and makes them candidates for reconstruction, that what is holy is meant to touch and sanctify what is profane, and that security, though acceptable as a means, can never be an end. It then becomes necessary to insist that safekeeping is in the interest of imparting, that purity must risk contamination in Christian service, that stewardship must be sensitive to change, and that sanctity must actively redeem. Because the Mind of Safety has no patience with these complementary and qualifying aspects of the "truth" it stands for, it is one-sided, articulating neither the Gospel in its fulness nor man's situation in its depth. It should therefore be abandoned and replaced by another which does fuller justice both to the richness of the Christian revelation and to the complexity of Christian existence in the world.

What is required is the adoption of the Positive Mind, which is generated by the many-facetted Gospel as it impinges on commissioned men residing in a temporal world full of ambiguities. This Mind is not simplistic, and it has no ready answers for every problem that arises, but it apprehends two things clearly: that the Christian stance is outward, and that, in imitation of God in Christ, the Christian community must exercise toward all men the love which "seeketh not her own." By this token it is incapable of praising and seeking security above all else. When confronted by some proposal this Mind does not ask whether its adoption would be safe, but only whether it would move the Church outward in saving action. Of any program, policy, or venture it asks only: is it divinely enjoined, and is it calculated to further the aims of the world-wide Kingdom. If the answer is affirmative, then any consideration of personal or ecclesiastical safety is to it irrelevant; the project must in any case be undertaken.

The Positive Mind proclaims that we are called t obedience only, and that obedience often puts u in places where the going is rough and where th dangers are both real and frightening. But, declares, no fearful anticipation of the hazards the way may be permitted to deter us, nor ma actual exposure to dire threats move us to see asylum and retreat. It is in the world that th Christian has his task, and though he may ar should in relative isolation commit to heart th Divine Directives and attend to the procurement his other furnishings, he may never build wal which shut him out from where his duty lies, raise gates which impede his service to a lost ar needful world. Nor may he out of apprehensio set up extra-biblical rules and regulations whic deny grown men legitimate access to that wor for purposes of enjoyment and appreciation, fo grace is there as well as sin, and the gifts of gra are waiting to be thankfully accepted no less tha the effects of sin are awaiting expiation ar removal.

WHAT HAS BEEN SAID ABOUT THE RELATION OF TH Positive Mind to that of Safety holds, with vari tions, of its relation to the Mind of Militanc Against this Mind, as against its near kin, th Positive Mind directs no simple negation whic leaves out of account the truth here apprehende It acknowledges the partial insights Militancy po sesses and it itself includes these in the interest wholeness. But the insights are merely parti nevertheless, and in their isolation they can fashi no acceptable perspective. Unattended as they a by complementary awarenesses they impart to th Mind of Militancy an imbalance no less unfortuna than the one we have already had occasion to d plore. The eccentricity of Militancy is different tha that of Safety — instead of flight it advocates a tack; but the cause of the eccentricity is the sam — the world is contemplated as primarily a threa When the world appears in this guise, flight attack is reasonable, of course, and of the tw attack would appear to be the more manly ar courageous; but that the world is only, or eve chiefly, a peril, requiring nothing so much as a sault, is hardly a Christian affirmation, and th Positive Mind can not bring itself to make i "Attack" is something to which it can not give central place.

What the Mind of Militancy correctly apprehen is that evil exists and that evil needs uprootin If it proclaimed no more than this no one cou quarrel with it, least of all a Christian whose canc and whose creed makes the knowledge of sin first requirement and its extirpation a continuin duty. The Positive Mind, accordingly, does not he demur. On the contrary, it is most deeply conscio of the fact that sin is not of God, that it has

tle to existence, that it deserves nothing but nihilation, and that Christians must ferret it t of every hiding place and summarily destroy it. he Positive Mind, therefore, is far from disparag- g all negativity; in a fallen world it is necessary say No!, and no one has ever said it more awe- mely than the Holy God Himself when at Calvary e delivered His well-beloved Son to death and hell. imitation of Him the Positive Mind includes de- als. In operation it is properly iconoclastic. It gitimatizes wrath, authorizes war, mounts offen- ves, utters condemnations, makes rejections, de- ers judgments, sanctions debate, sponsors polem- s, and in general encourages every Christian fort to rid the world of ignorance and perversity. y the same token it repudiates the spurious ireni- sm which cries peace when there is no peace, hich appears incapable of indignation, and which disposed to tolerate error, injustice, oppression, ce, and every other evil. Such an irenicism has no ace in the Kingdom of Peace; there is no love it, neither love of God nor love of man.

It was necessary to say this with maximum force nd clarity for there appears to be a feeling in me quarters that the advocacy of love and posi- vity and the repudiation of a militant mentality mmits one to spiritual pacifism and is consonant ith nothing but callous indifference to evil and sy indulgence of wrong. Nothing is, of course, rther from the truth. Love has in it a flaming alousy not unlike that by which God maintains is Deity, and love brooks no profanation of the oly, no subversion of the good, no violation of e right.

But all this adds up to something less than the ilitancy which would attack the world and deliver to destruction. Though the Positive Mind in- udes denials, it is not defined by them, for in it e the affirmations which overarch and control the bservient negations. It apprehends that however ligatory it may be to declare total war on abstract il, there is no call to declare such a war on the ncrete evil world. To that world no unqualified o! can be addressed; a completely negative stance relation to it is christianly impossible. There are least three reasons for this — reasons philosoph- al, theological, and religious.

The philosophical reason is that the world, simply ecause it is a creature, has its own inherent and alienable goodness. No fall, however radical, can spossess it of this Divine conferment; no evil that fects it can destroy its God-determined structure. vil, in fact, presupposes this good endowment and uld not exist without it. Since evil is not refer- able to the Author of all being, it has no proper eing of its own. It is no more than adjectival, odifying while never becoming part of the sub- ance of the world. It never appears in isolation, ut always in conjunction with some good, upon which it feeds, and without which it would simply cease to be. It is parasitic. It depends for whatever reality it has upon that which God has made and which, because He made it, He continues to affirm. This world-directed affirmation, uncancelled by sin and the very ground of sin's possibility, no Christian man may fail to echo, lest he be guilty of disparaging God's handiwork. Philosophical considerations alone therefore make impossible an attitude of unqualified negativity; they encourage positivity by pointing unmistakably to a worldly goodness which needs recognition, restoration, and embracement.

So, too, do the well-known theological doctrines of General Revelation, Common Grace, and the Universal Operation of the Holy Spirit. These are distinguishable doctrines and have severally their own peculiar bearing on our problem, but all alike enforce the need for complementing the bare No! of simplistic Militancy with the Yes! and No! of the positive Christian mind. Alongside the worthwhileness and stability that creation and providence give to cosmic being are the many good gifts that common grace bestows. It will not do to disparage this grace, however short it falls of effecting inner renewal, for it is God's, and it fills the earth with many things to appreciate and enjoy. Its presence and operation keep the world from being burdened with the extremest outworkings of man's radical perversity; it enables society to establish a tolerably just order in which men of every faith can live their common life; and it preserves that solidarity of mankind which makes possible the association of Christian and non-Christian in all sorts of cultural enterprises. The undoubted truth and vast importance of the antithesis must not be allowed to obscure these facts and entice the Christian to go out and wage undiscriminating war upon the world. The doctrine of the Antithesis needs always to be complemented by that of Common Grace, and — to silence all cavil let it be said with utmost clarity — the doctrine of Common Grace needs always to be attended by that of the Antithesis. Neither one in isolation can fashion a Christian perspective on the world; each must internally qualify the other. It is the merit of the Positive Mind that it holds these two in tension and tolerates, on that account, no absolutisms either of the right or of the left. In the present context this means that the absolutism of Militancy, with its conscious or unconscious disparagement of grace, is necessarily uncongenial to the Positive Mind.

But the chief reason for the stance of Positivity is religious. There is one fact — a fact central to the Bible, definitive of Christianity, and regulative of all approved behavior in and toward the world — which the Christian may never put out of sight: the fact that God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. This fact the Positive Mind takes with utmost seriousness, allowing it, together with

the supporting truths already mentioned, to shape its whole perspective upon mankind. It apprehends not only that the world as God's creation is well and permanently structured and thus never beyond salvaging; not only that it is illumined and enriched by the gifts of universal grace betokening God's general favor; but also and especially that it is so much the object of God's love that for its redemption He gave His only begotten Son. It is this love, which gives and heals, and disdains assault, that is set as a pattern to be followed by all who call upon the name of the Lord. No appeal to the reprobative acts of God, or to the reality of hell, or to the Divine sovereignty and justice which mysteriously underlie these things, can avail to obscure the centrality of love in God or to compromise the moral necessity we are under to govern our lives by charity to all. Whatever be the prerogative of God it is since Calvary no prerogative of man to waste or destroy anything that God has made, not even under the piously false pretension that we are thereby furthering the plans dictated by the inviolable righteousness of God. Whatever judgment shall be finally passed upon the world, it will be God's judgment and not ours (except by sanctified consent), and it will be in view of man's recalcitrance in the face of overtures to peace; it will be because man spurned the proffered love of God. Love meanwhile is the all-controlling word, and it precludes all assaults upon men with a view to their destruction or with intent to hurt or damage their true humanity. Sin and evil as abstract entities remain fair game throughout all time; but since God struck at Himself on Golgatha all blows struck by men at other men are irrelevant and proscribed. The battle joined in Christ precludes all further battles, except such as may be permitted by special authorization to the ministers of state. In the sphere of morals and religion there is for sinners one message only: that God is appeased and at war no more. What is therefore proper to God's messengers are beckonings, invitations, overtures to fellowship; and what they are called to are acts of healing, restoration, and reconstruction. It is this that the Positive Mind affirms in the face of Militancy, and in affirming it it believes itself fixed at the center of the Gospel.

WHEN FEAR OF THE WORLD IS REPLACED BY LOVE FOR it, when flight and attack are arrested by the impulses of helpfulness and service, when, in short, a stance is taken at the center of the Gospel, then a position is achieved from which the partial insights and relative worths of Safety and Militancy can be duly appreciated and thankfully embraced. It would seem, accordingly, that it is from this center that all of us in the Church should proceed in our effort to attain the wholeness and unity we seek. If we are in any measure separated by differences of emphasis and outlook there are availab in biblical Positivity all the elements required f a fruitful rapprochement, for in its healing ou reach toward a dying world there is both a swor thrust against whatever may impede the process redemption and a protective guardianship of t Gospel-remedies to be administered. To recogni this is to take the first step toward that onene which, when achieved, will infuse our fellowsh with such powers as could well revolutionize t world.

Let it be observed, then, that however mistak the mentality of Safety may be in isolation from t redemptive activity which is the Church's centr task, the redemptive activity itself can not be ca ried on without due concern for the offices of piet the soundness of the redemptive message, the pe sonal purity of its bearers, and the security of t bases from whence they go out to exemplify a bear witness to Christ's healing ministry. Th means concretely that the Positive Mind, while d couraging all merely mystical flights to spiritu ivory towers, imposes upon every Christian the ob gation to sometimes turn his back upon the world order in solitude to face God in acts of pure d votion. It also means that the Positive Mind, wh encouraging periodical critical reappraisals of o theological formulas, can give comfort neither those who in their enthusiasm to "reach out" lo their grasp of the very Christian truth which alo justifies their outreach, nor to those who in the effort to make the bitter medicine of the Gosp palatable to the taste of sinful men dilute it to t point where it soothes without restoring. It al means that the Positive Mind, while judging no o in respect of meat or drink and authorizing all sit with publicans and sinners in the interest their redemption, can look only with disfavor those who conform in heart and walk to the mor pattern of unredeemed society, thus losing all the Christian savor. It means, too, that while the gat of the Church must always be open *on the side* the world, they must never be open *to* the wor in such a way that through the intrusion of a d bilitating worldliness the Church loses all pow to exert *upon* the world the redemptive influen it was appointed to exercise. Meanwhile, of cours none of us should be so conservative as to disallo a valid Christian freedom in relation to inherit ethnic conventions, nor so fearful of new proposa as to discourage original attempts to make Chri tianity relevant to the new and puzzling problem which face the world in the area of atomic energ space flight, race relations, international organ zation, and the like. What the implications of th Gospel are for the recognition or non-recogniti of Red China, for the phenomenon of increasin world population, for the suitability of a Roma Catholic in the White House, and for a whole ho of other problems are not so clear that tentati

olutions should not charitably be considered, how-ver wrong they may on further reflection or in the ght of history prove to be. Yet this latitude, in its rn, should not be taken as allowing any want of undness, rectitude, and certainty in the essentials our faith, for without these we have nothing at l to say to the world and can not share at all in e Christian program of redemption.

Something similar must be said in relation to ilitancy. However little justification there may for making "war" the controlling idea in Chris-an morals, and however mistaken and ruinous the ilitant disposition is when divorced from redemp-ve purposes, these purposes themselves can hardly pursued without employing tools, techniques, and ctics which in some sense do "destroy." The rategems of salvation do require the application a knife to the diseased parts of the world; and ey do require the overthrowing of every strong-old raised against the Lord. We shall have to be repared therefore to make incisions which may urt, and to conduct assaults which may discomfit. o mistakenly romantic notion of what love is and sentimental squeamishness may here deter us. he world being what it is, the healing ministry nnot dispense with surgery and the goals of peace nnot be reached without deflating pride, pricking retension, and wearing down the stubborn will in ays which do not usually "please" the object of ur solicitude and care. But this cannot be helped; e job must be undertaken. Of course, it is un-ristian to *like* the job. Christians do not want to urt. They detest war and conduct it with great luctance. If therefore they see a fellow Christian ho delights to stand in the panoply of battle, who lishes the fight and daily sallies forth to see with hom he may cross swords, they will know that is is a deluded Christian wanting in the meekness nd humility of the Master. Yet, when all is said nd done, there is ample room in Christian Posi-vity for unpleasant and regrettable surgical opera-ons serviceable to health and restoration.

HAVE ATTEMPTED NOTHING IN THIS ARTICLE BEYOND depiction of the Positive Mind in relation to the her Minds which, lacking in wholeness, are in eir isolation eccentric but which, harnessed to demptive purposes in subordination to Positivity, n profitably be integrated into the life and work the Christian Church. There is no doubt a great al more to be said about the Positive Mind, and may be that I shall at some other time attempt further formal characterization of it. Meanwhile will receive on-going articulation in the *Journal* it continues to appear from month to month. The itors and publishers hope and pray, now as at the ginning, that in this way they may contribute the creation of a wholesome ecclesiastical unity nd provide a stance for a concerted and effective inistry to a world in need.

# Theology in the Sixties

*by James Daane*

THE INTENT OF THIS ARTICLE IS TO DISCERN THE theological time and climate in our Reformed community as we enter the Sixties.

Between the years 1918 and 1925 the Christian Reformed churches repudiated the theological position of Harry Bultema on, shall we say, "premillennialism," the position of R. Janssen on "higher criticism," and of Herman Hoeksema on "common grace." After the repudiations of these three attempts to strike out creatively toward new theological frontiers, theological interest sagged and activity subsided. From 1925 until 1950 nothing much happened. Although the same quarter century in Europe was a time of exciting renaissance and massive theological productivity, these years in our own — and indeed also in the wider American Reformed community — were quiet years. There was neither critical theological self-examination, nor any new studies in depth of positions held. The silencing of heresy in our community seemed to have silenced theology itself. The churches quite understandably were weary of theological controversy, specially when it ended in schisms and depositions. Yet the hasty and rather superficial manner in which these competitive theological positions were stilled, and the resultant quarter century of theological quiet and sterility suggest that we may have cured the disease but killed the patient.

However these things may be, theological quest gave way to theological quiet. We passed on what we had, but added nothing to it. Theological research gave way to mere indoctrination; we catechized but did not theologize. Since life must produce or die, our resources dwindled. Since our theological soil lay fallow, lean years produced greater leanness. When, for example, the late Professor Berkhof ended his many years of teaching theology, he left no obvious replacement. The same situation obtains at the moment in the field of Old Testament. After a generation of no advance, it suddenly became necessary for the Christian Reformed churches to cast about for theological leadership and competence. In spite of an engrained reluctance, they looked — and still do today — to other churches and even to Europe to meet their theological needs. Though we come by the lesson hard, we are learning that if we do not sow, we shall not reap.

Although the decade of the Fifties saw no great theological revival, it did, in my judgment, contain a kind of theological stirring. There seems to have been a rekindling of theological interest and activity, a kind of renewed vitality which, if not

stifled, may be a harbinger of better things to come. The causes of this new theological interest were no doubt many. It was due in part to stimuli coming from the bustle of theological studies in the world about us, in part to the possibilities of studying abroad which followed the end of a great depression and a great war. And it was in part also thrust upon us by the many decisions which our churches were compelled to make on live and burning practical issues during the past ten years or thereabouts. Amusements, divorce and remarriage, ecumenical affiliations, labor union affiliations, scriptural infallibility, united theological training, reunion with Protestant Reformed people (churches) — all these forced us to look again to the theological foundations on the basis of which we must make decisions. Mention may also be made of the celebration to our Centennial in 1957. This gave us occasion to look again to our origins and to the theological justification of our separate existence. And, to mention no more, the coming of thousands of Reformed immigrants from Europe helped to needle us out of our theological slumber. But whatever the causes, the decade of the Fifties presented a theological stirring and fermentation that was absent in the previous quarter century.

As we plunge into the Sixties, we should face the question, Where do we go from here? What must we do to keep these seeds of promise, these movements of life, growing so that they will bear a theological harvest in the Sixties and Seventies?

It will of course profit us nothing to cover our shame and hide our embarrassment by denying the lean years. The absence of theological scholarship both in the form of books and of men is something that cannot be hidden. We can pretend that the books are there, or that our actual productions have been great, but we shall be deceiving only ourselves. As to the absence of theological leadership, this too is something that we cannot hide from ourselves; as long as we must cast about in other Reformed churches for competent leadership, we can hide it neither from ourselves nor from others. The first thing we must do, therefore, is to admit frankly to a quarter century of lean years.

The second thing we must do is to recognize that a quarter century of leanness has taken its toll in awareness and sensitivity to what are truly Reformed positions. Many things have been said, written, and done in the past decades which betray a non-acquaintance with basic Reformed positions and motifs. The inability to recognize what is Reformed and what is not is on the increase. I fear that while we formally and officially hold to Reformed positions, the spirit and the motifs of these positions are increasingly escaping from us. Quite candidly, I fear that we will not retain our Reformed character if we have another quarter century of theological inertia and inactivity. Once a theological tradition and heritage loses its sense quest and its expansive dynamic spirit and is r duced to mere indoctrination, it is doomed to e tinction. One of the most frightening things is t sad fact that today the canons of Reformed orth doxy are commonly regarded as a mere matter proper distribution of emphases, the "proper balan ing" of one doctrine over against another. It shou be obvious that such standards for judging orth doxy are dangerous since they are wholly subjectiv incapable of application, and extra-confessional.

Thirdly, we must recognize that theological a vance cannot completely avoid the asking, at time of the wrong questions, and, at times, the giving wrong answers. No one can speak the theological la word. A theological conversation is required, and n every sentence of every man will be truth. But the interplay of theological discussion, truth w emerge, a truth for our times and for our ow needs. To have such a theological conversation v must achieve the kind of theological maturity ar poise which recognizes that the Church of Chri will not be destroyed, or even seriously damage if men of good will make mistakes and fall in some errors in their theological quest and probing for clearer and better insights and understandin Intellectual errors are not the greatest sins, ar the Church of Christ will not be destroyed by ou honest errors and failures. The person engage in theological research and study is no more infall ble than are his ready critics who so quickly fea that the "implications of the implications" of h positions will destroy the Church.

If theology in our community is to return to ha pier and more profitable days, we must rid ourselv of touchy fears and of a psychology of insecurit and replace it with that kind of poised maturit which one so often finds in the Gereformeerde Ke ken in Holland and which keeps them from bein shaken from stem to stern by every new idea ar change in the theological situation. Continued invit tion to their leaders to be guest professors, and greater study of their theological production, ma help us to attain such poise and maturity as is n shaken by every small turbulence in the theologic climate.

I am *not* pleading for theological license nor f indifference to sound orthodoxy. But I am pleadin for that tolerance which comes with the recognitio that the person who engages in theological pursui into regions little known or as yet untrod has, i the sense indicated above, the right (not before Go but before man) to be wrong, to make mistake If we continue to so judge each other as to give th impression that those engaged in theological studi cannot speak unless and until they have the who truth and nothing but the truth, the lean years w return and with them silence and sterility.

Finally, if we are to become theologically productive, *we must return to Biblical studies.* We must recapture the habit of studying the Scriptures and of listening again to the Word of God with a hearing ear. If we are to speak authentically to our needs and to our times, we must listen, and continue to listen to God. This is not to disparage our creeds and systematic theologies, but the mere refinements of the contents of these is not the way of theological advance. Progress in theology does not come by further refinement of what we already hold in systematic and creedal form. This road leads only to dead orthodoxy and sterile scholasticism. Theological progress and virility demand a never ending searching and listening to the Scriptures. All too much of what has claimed to be serious Bible study has been merely an employment of the Bible to reinforce our religious prejudices and to prove rather than correct and enrich our Biblical knowledge.

On what specific matters should we concentrate our theological energies in the years ahead? What demands the future will make upon the churches's theologians cannot be predicted with complete certainty. Since, however, the past often reappears in the future, some of the tasks of theology in the future can be predicted with reasonable assurance.

I suggest that theological research should engage itself with the problem of the nature of the Church. The question of the nature of the Church is an urgent question for it is involved in the whole matter of ecumenics and church union, and of our relationship to these realities of our times. Our membership in the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, the overture of Classis Holland to the forthcoming Synod that we consider reaffiliation with the National Association of Evangelicals, our relationship to both the National and World Council of Churches, together with our current discussions about union with Protestant Reformed and Orthodox Presbyterian churches, all make the question of the nature of the Church a question of practical urgency. The same practical urgency appears in the relationship of our church to other churches in the area of Christian missions. The decisions that we make on these matters of inter-church relationships will depend on a clearer and more adequate understanding of the nature of the Church of Christ than we possess at this date.

Another great need is serious, biblical, and theological consideration of the question of racial integration — a matter on which we have been all too reluctant to speak. Other questions include that of election as an election *in* Christ, or as an election which occurs antecedent to Christ, of which therefore Christ is merely the executor; the question of the ethics of the permissibility of the use of nuclear weapons; the question of the ever changing, never quite the same, relationship of Church and State; the question of the theological foundation of Christian schools, a question which is being thrust upon us by the financial crisis faced by our schools through the insistence that Christian education is the task of the Christian parent rather than that of the Christian community; the question of the revolutionary character and role of Christianity in a time of social, economic, and political revolution. All these and more will demand the finest and most concentrated dedication of our theological capabilities in the years ahead. May none hinder, and may God bless the execution of this very difficult theological task in the years ahead. And may the quest be carried forward not without us, that the lean years may not return.

# A Decade of Growing Pains *by George Stob*

WE LOOK BACK NOW ON TEN YEARS OF LIFE AND service as a journal within the communion of the Christian Reformed Church.

What kind of years were they? What was the character of life and thought and development in the Church in which we found our place and calling?

A survey of this decade should be of interest and profit to all who are members of and in any sense interested in the Christian Reformed Church. But it is of particular interest to us as a journal because it shows the large context of all that we have written, and it discloses the large store of blessing and opportunity and challenge that have helped to make *The Reformed Journal* whatever it has been or has become.

We look back over these years of life in our communion, therefore, not simply to satisfy curiosity, but to better know ourselves and our calling, and the better to prepare ourselves for the service of the Church of Jesus Christ in the years that lie ahead.

There is something about this span of the 50's in the Christian Reformed Church that is significant. There is in it the witness of the life of a church that is robust and vigorous, though not unmixed with evidences of wasteful turbulence and tension and the passion of an introverted zeal, nor without evidences of failures which the church herself will want to confess. But there is no mistaking the fact that these were ten years of life — vibrant, conclusive, moving, fruitful.

In this and in other issues of *The Reformed*

*Journal* we hope to offer a survey of the decade in which we count the span of our own life, beginning in this issue with a survey of the growth of the church and some problems occasioned by it.

THESE WERE TEN YEARS OF PHENOMENAL GROWTH, perhaps exceeding in total numbers and percentage any comparable period in our history. The largest contributing factor was the steady stream of immigration to Canada, as will appear from statistics given below.

The following table of statistics will give a picture of our growth in the decade 1950-60:

| | In 1950 | In 1960 |
|---|---|---|
| Congregations | 341 | 541 |
| Total Membership | 148,881 | 236,145 |
| Ministers (Active) | 350 | 587 |
| Catechism Enrollment | 33,965 | 48,463 |
| Sunday School Enrollment | 35,238 | 63,504 |
| Canadian Congregations | 26 | 138 |
| Canadian Membership | 7,607 | 56,825 |

Total membership increase in this period was 87,264 souls. Of this increase 49,218, or more than one half of the total increase, took place in Canada alone. A comparison of Catechism and Sunday School enrollment may be significant. In 1950 the Sunday School enrollment exceeded Catechism enrollment by less than 2,000. In 1960 the differential had risen to more than 15,000. Looking at the comparison from another point of view, Catechism enrollment increased in the decade by 14,498, while in the same period Sunday School enrollment increased by twice that number, or 28,266. All of which may reflect a more vigorous program of community outreach.

The measure and character of this remarkable denominational growth brought with it some problems which added to both the interest and the vexations of denominational life. We look at three of them in this article.

### *The Problem of Integration*

One problem was that of integration. Internal growth comes as easily as the absorption of a mother's milk. But external growth — the major kind in this decade — calls for bigger adjustments, and a more careful exercise of integration. The integration of converts by evangelism was not our biggest problem, though some discussion seemed to regard it so. The proportion of converts to total membership was relatively small, and integration was in large measure achieved in the very process of ministering to the "outsiders" and bringing them to membership.

The largest problem in integration was and still is that of absorbing and adjusting to the large increase of immigrants from the Netherlands. Here the achievement of one body in one church is a bit more complicated.

There were minor adjustments to be made Though we had supposed we were done with bilingual church life, we found ourselves dealing again and anew with the Dutch-English duality Dutch and English services, Dutch and English speaking preachers, and Dutch-English periodicals were needful in large segments of our denomination But the church and her ministers responded nobly to the need of our immigrant brethren. Our Canadian members will not soon forget the large service rendered them by an extensive Immigration and Home Missions program which helped them in finding not only homes but also church homes; the willingness of many American ministers, the younger as well as the elder, to serve in bilingual Canadian churches; and the adaptation of the church press, especially the nearly-retired Dutch weekly, *De Wachter,* to Canadian interests and needs. But perhaps the most significant contribution to the process of integration in this area was that made by the immigrants themselves, who made determined efforts to master the language of their new land and church, quickly introduced English worship services, participated fruitfully in the discussions of the church communion and in the deliberations of church assemblies, and in some instances set in motion evangelistic efforts by which they joined in the growing sense of denominational responsibility for community outreach.

ANOTHER ADJUSTMENT STILL IN PROCESS IS THAT occasioned by the spread of the denomination across two countries — the United States and Canada When there were but few Christian Reformed congregations in Canada, there was very little consciousness of a distinct Canadian identity. But the sizable segment of the Christian Reformed Church in Canada, now more than 138 congregations and some 60,000 members — numbers of respectable denominational proportions — has given rise to some measure of indigenous Canadian consciousness

This is inescapable and right. So large and self conscious a body as the Christian Reformed people in Canada should not be content to think of themselves as a branch of a church living and serving in another country. There are problems and interests, opportunities and challenges, which are peculiar to a church by reason of her identification with the national community of which she is a part. If the church in Canada were to live in terms of the long look to Jerusalem — ancient or modern — she would lose something of her universal Christian character and be less than properly relevant to the national community in which God placed her. It is no more than natural and right, therefore, that in the Canadian Christian Reformed communion there should rise a journal such as *Church and Nation,* calculated to foster a consciousness of identification with and calling to the Canadian community.

This brings into the Christian Reformed Church some measure of difference and even tension between Canada and the United States, between the churches north and those south of the border. This is not serious, though we may be ignorant of the implications of it for the development of the church on either side. But it needs recognition, and such differences as appear or such tensions as develop need to be met and managed with charity and understanding from both sides.

On this score the achievement of integration does not mean the reduction of the whole to an undifferentiated pattern of uniformity, but the cultivation of a vital unity together with an honoring and a protecting of natural and needful differences. In how far this means the Canadian churches should feel moved or be encouraged to develop their own characteristic features of life and practice and organization one cannot say. But it is certain that while as Christians we live in terms of national and cultural distinctions, we shall have to find in them occasions for common growth and enrichment and not for estrangement or separation.

PERHAPS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT FORM OF ADJUSTment required for fruitful integration is that made necessary by the difference between the mind and spirit of the Dutch immigrant on the one hand and the American on the other. That there is a difference of mentality and outlook, resulting in some differences in ecclesiastical and cultural concern and objective, is recognized and spoken of by Christian Reformed people on both sides of the border. These differences exist because notwithstanding a common faith in a common Reformed tradition, we have been conditioned by certain differences of national and cultural experience and background.

Here again it would be deadly counsel to suggest to the Canadian immigrants that they leave their particular convictions and concerns behind in the country from which they came, and conform to the prevailing thought and practice of the new country and church into which they have come. Perhaps it is true that the social and political context in the United States and Canada requires a different kind of application of religious principle than was customary in the Netherlands. If so, the immigrant will have to learn by experience and by a living process of adjustment. In any event, the immigrant will have to live and serve as a child of God in his new environment, and he can scarcely be expected to do so except in terms of the convictions and goals native to his religious character and his years of religious training and practice. It would be both unrealistic and unidealistic to propose a suspension of ideals and of effort toward ideal objectives until one becomes more acquainted with the realities of a new situation. If the immigrant is mistaken in his beliefs concerning the kind of cultural goal the Christian should strive for in American society, he could better learn of it through living and working than through simply listening and waiting. Meanwhile, he might demonstrate to himself and to others that his kind of kingdom striving is more right and fruitful than the pattern of Christian social action to which we have accustomed ourselves on this side of the Atlantic.

On the other hand, the Canadian brethren are sometimes tempted to a high degree of impatience with their American brethren, who seem to them only too often "dragging their feet" in matters of social and political action, and in kingdom activities to be governed too much by practical and too little by principial considerations. If it is so, we shall have occasion to learn better through the exercise of our enlarged and enriched fellowship.

In a way the Canadian element in our membership occupies an interesting place in the communion and in the assemblies of the Christian Reformed Church. Assuming a certain kind of homogeneity among them, it may be said that they constitute a significant segment in the Christian Reformed Church. Since they are theologically well oriented, able, energetic, and articulate, they are capable of exercising a considerable influence in the Christian Reformed Church, and this ability will increase with a greater measure of orientation to their new church and a greater mastery of the language. This is the more interesting because Canadians cannot be as conveniently categorized as we sometimes assume. There are some things in respect of which they seem quite "conservative" to some people in the United States, and other things in respect of which they seem to be somewhat "liberal" to others. Meanwhile, their position is strategic, and in the major church assemblies they could hold a kind of balance of power. There are, indeed, some issues in respect of which one already hears mention of a "bloc of Canadian votes" at Synod. The Canadians, we are sure, will regard their interesting position with a sense of humor, and exercise themselves in it with a good conscience for the healthiest communion of the Church of Christ.

The differences that exist are differences with which we meet and serve each other best when we stand in them with honesty and conviction, and with hearty concern for our common fellowship. It is not necessary for one to be in all respects what the other is, but it is needful for us to live and serve with each other, and to be what in the Spirit of God we become together. This achievement of unity in difference is a perennial problem in the Christian Church and has always been an acute one in the Christian Reformed Church. We have too often been victim of the spirit that wishes to make differences basic and the cause for separation and division. It is unfortunately deep set in our origins. Perhaps the new exercise toward integration with

our Canadian brethren will help us to achieve a larger measure of integration in the whole body than has been the case heretofore.

### *The Problem of Administration*

A second problem incidental to the remarkable denominational growth of the last decade is one which concerns church administration.

Sometimes it is thought that the problem is most acute in the constitution of our Synodical assemblies. In 1950 there were only 19 Classes, and with each of them represented by four delegates the Synodical assembly was comprised of what was considered a manageable 76 members. In 1960 there were 30 Classes, and the membership of Synod was increased by nearly fifty to what seems an unmanageable 120 delegates.

This added a new argument for the introduction of Particular Synods, a proposal introduced several years ago, but which over the years has had great difficulty in finding acceptance. Now, it is being said, the large growth of the Christian Reformed Church and the multiplication of Classes makes Particular Synods a practical necessity. This, however, seems to be the least cogent of all arguments. Synod is, after all, not a profoundly important part of the church's life. And if it appears that Synodical assemblies come to be of unmanageable size, they can be reduced by the simple expedient of reducing the number of delegates by half — which would still allow for a full and equitable representation of the churches.

It would seem that the problem of administration is a matter of some real concern only in connection with the needs of some local areas. There are at least three instances in which the problem may be seen to have some urgency.

The first is the instance of the Canadian churches. Strong sentiment for Particular Synods comes out of them. At first it might be thought that this can be explained by the desire of the Canadian churches to reproduce here the pattern of Particular Synods to which they were accustomed in the Netherlands. I venture to say that this is not the case. The expressed sentiment of the Canadian people shows this interest to be motivated mainly by a concern for Canadian needs. Not only the homogeneous immigrant character but also the distinct national character gives to the Canadian churches a set of problems and concerns common to themselves, and there is a felt need for a kind of ecclesiastical organization that will enable them to meet with each other for discussion and action. Obviously, Particular Synods could serve pre-eminently well in Canada. The fact that they would be considerably less meaningful and perhaps wasteful in the United States makes their denomination-wide introduction inadvisable, however. Is it reasonable to assume that the Canadian churches might properly organize Particular Synods while continuing to be represented at Synod by Classes? Classes Hudson and Hackensack in the East do function jointly in Eastern Home Missions within the present framework.

ANOTHER PROBLEM IN CHURCH ADMINISTRATION concerns the organization of the smaller Classes. Since the growth of our church has brought us into areas heretofore not occupied, there is a problem of groups of churches still small in number and membership residing at some distance from existing church centers. One such group is that of the five churches now organized in the State of Florida. Whether there are such church groups in other sections of the U.S. or Canada I do not know. But Florida will stand as representative of the problem. The Florida churches are members of Classis Hackensack, but being more than one thousand miles distant cannot be considered neighbor to the Hackensack churches or to share in the particular problems which the Hackensack churches have in common. The Florida churches reside in Classis Hackensack only for administrative reasons.

The fact that this greatly increases the Classical expenses of Classis Hackensack without measurable return to the Classis is a minor consideration. The matter of consequence is that the five churches of Florida and several mission stations are deprived of adequate opportunity to cultivate their common life and pursue the common task set before them in Florida. It is an interesting question whether five churches numbering a bit more than 200 families should be permitted to organize into a Classis and thus take their place in our administrative structure. If one makes *denominational* structure the determinative consideration, any such application might be disapproved. But if the need and well-being of the churches and missions be the governing consideration, it is hard to see how there could be ground for denying the request. Inequity in representation in Synodical matters is no obstacle since we operate with considerable differences in representation already. Classis Cadillac is six times smaller in number of church families than Classis Grand Rapids East, and Classis Florida would bear a more favorable relation to at least seven other Classes than Classis Cadillac bears to Classis Grand Rapids East.

A THIRD PROBLEM IN CHURCH ADMINISTRATION BEARS upon the growing college movement. While Grand Rapids still claims the largest numerical percentage of Christian Reformed membership, it is no longer the exclusive cultural and educational center of the Christian Reformed Church. Junior Colleges have arisen in Iowa and Illinois, and there is no good reason to suppose that they might not rise in Canada and other parts of the United States.

But the only college supported and governed by the church is the college in Grand Rapids. This establishes a situation of inequity which in the course of time will become increasingly intolerable. It is now time for decision, and it appears that decision can run in only one direction. Some four years ago the Christian Reformed Church refused to consider the separation of Calvin College from church control. Now, unless the church is ready to say that Calvin should be enlarged and developed to serve the whole denomination, and to declare that she will not hold herself responsible in any sense for colleges arising elsewhere, the church ought to do the only consistent and just thing — assume financial and administrative responsibility for all colleges necessary in the Christian Reformed community.

This means that Dort, Trinity, and other colleges that appear necessary should be taken over, supported, and governed by a denominational Board of Education. If it is necessary — as the Synod of 1957 said it was — for Calvin College to be owned and operated by the church, it is just as necessary for Dort, Trinity, and others to be so owned and operated. Other solutions of our growth problem in the area of higher education have been proposed, but it is doubtful that they will satisfy sound educational requirements and provide a manageable method of financing. Either *all* of our colleges, including Calvin, should be independent of the church, or *all* of them should be owned and operated by the church. The first alternative is said to be neither necessary nor possible. Then the second must be followed, and quickly, before the disproportion between what is expended on an expanded Calvin and what is expended on other schools becomes enormous.

### *The Problem of Ministerial Supply*

A third major problem occasioned by the remarkable growth of our denomination in the last decade is that of ministerial supply. On this score we have moved in ten years from the extreme of an alarmed sense of oversupply to an equally alarmed sense of crucial shortage.

In 1950 the Board of Trustees informed Synod that "the Seminary enrollment had leaped to an all time high with a total of eighty-seven," and added: "Again we call attention to these large numbers of prospective leaders. It might be well for Synod to repeat and underscore its decision of last year, i.e., request consistories, mission boards, etc., to be alert to possibilities of new fields and spheres of activity where this great potential of power may profitably be put to work in a world sorely in need of their consecrated efforts" (*Acts* 1950, p. 252). Synod decided to accede to the request of the Board of Trustees, and urged "our congregations and mission-boards to do everything possible to open up new fields of missionary activity for which the services of these young men are available," urged "our larger churches to give very serious consideration to the possibility and also the wisdom of organizing daughter congregations so as to open up new fields of labor," requested "our Seminary faculty to do what it can to keep these matters alive in the consciousness of our consistories and congregations," and requested "the editors of our church papers to write about these matters at suitable intervals so that they may be properly impressed upon the minds and hearts of our constituency" (*Acts* 1950, pp. 25, 26).

In the year 1959 we were informed that "the Christian Reformed Church faces nothing less than a distressing and crippling shortage of ministers." And in 1960 Synod was moved at the behest of the Home Missions Board, supported by the Foreign Missions and the College and Seminary Board, to take action. In view of "the disturbing shortage of kingdom workers," Synod decided to "appoint a committee to work out a program to assist our homes, churches, and schools in leading our youth into ministerial or missionary service." One reason given was that "the acute shortage of ministers and missionaries has been apparent for some time and indications are that it will become increasingly so" (*Acts* 1960, pp. 117, 118). This might seem to indicate that the various exhortations of 1950 to provide "new fields of labor" were very fruitful. It might also indicate that we were afflicted with a certain lack of vision.

In any event, we now look into the face of a serious ministerial shortage. In a certain sense this is much more healthy than the circumstance of oversupply. This more truly reflects the relationship of the church to the task confronting her. In consideration of the world's great need of the Gospel, it must perhaps be said in every age that the "fields are white unto harvest, but the laborers are few." A church embarrassed with a surfeit of kingdom workers might be a church without an adequate sense of her calling, without concern for urgent human need, and without willingness to pay the price required to meet it. Thank God, we are at least as a Church of Jesus Christ, "in business," with a large shingle hanging out: "Jobs Open."

It is also possible to look upon the present serious ministerial shortage as a reflection of the spirit of secularism possessing the church. This disproportion between the flourishing growth of the church and the alarming shortage of kingdom workers raises some questions about the vitality and meaning of our growth, doesn't it? It ought to move us to examine ourselves more closely to see whether the numerical and institutional and material growth of our church is without corresponding growth in spiritual vitality. When the church flourishes, her growth ought also to be in power to serve, and with

greater devotion for carrying on her mission. Our churches are indeed filled with bulging memberships, we carry on a satisfying church life with an enriched liturgy and in ample and luxurious church facilities, and we are quite content for the rich heritage we possess. "To whom much is given, of the same much is required." And being so much enriched, we should be more at ease in our spirits if there came from our communion many more young men and women to carry on the Lord's work in our world.

It is chastening, therefore, to recognize that not only do we suffer from lack of workers to send out to the world's need, but are without capacity to supply the needs of our own churches. We, who are so rich, must take from other little denominations and needier churches some of their ministers to serve us. There is point to what Professor Harold Dekker remarked in 1959 with reference to the fact that we have been relying on other denominations to supply ministers for our own pulpits. Said he: "With our splendid theological heritage and our fine Reformed tradition regarding the ministry, we should if anything be sending men into the ministry of other denominations. Instead we have become dependent on others. Here is a point for rigorous self-examination" (*The Banner*, Aug. 7, 1959).

All of this occurs at a time when education and educational opportunity are more widespread, in our community too, than ever before. But though our colleges are overrun with students, far too few of them aspire to the ministry. This is perhaps a reflection of the present peril of worldliness to which we are subject and from which we suffer along with other denominations in our country. There is general complaint that business and industry and the growing demands and opportunities of a developing science are drawing men into materially rewarding occupations and professions and away from the professions which offer occasion for sacrifice and service rather than gain. It was right, therefore, for the Board of Home Missions and the Synod of 1960 to say: "In view of the tremendous appeal of the many secular vocations in our modern world, it is imperative that the church should present to her members a clear statement of the calling, urgency, and challenge of the ministry and missionary service, strongly urging them to give themselves to this service" (*Acts* 1960, p. 118).

There are a few other angles to this problem of ministerial shortage which ought to make us thoughtful. We may, for one thing, thank God for all that He has given to us in the influx of immigrant Netherlanders who have come to Canada and so greatly enriched the life of our denomination. While it is true that they have in a blessed way increased our burden, they have also brought very great treasures with them. If it were not for the ministers from the Netherlands come to serve our Canadian churches, and the very large proportion of immigrants preparing for and entering into our ministry, our ministerial shortage would be much more serious than it is at present. Since 1950, forty ministers have come to us from churches in the Netherlands. And in recent years the percentage of immigrant Netherlanders studying for the ministry in our church has been as high as 33 to 40 percent.

This is not an unmixed good, however. There is something about it that should humble us and induce real concern. Prof. Dekker puts it well: "It goes without saying that we do not regret having Dutch immigrants in such numbers studying for the ministry . . . . But when we consider that the number of immigrant students is proportionately far in excess of the number of native Americans and Canadians, there is clear reason for concern both as to the failure of our home churches to raise up sons for the ministry and as to a possible future deficiency in a truly indigenous ministerial leadership for our churches" (*The Banner*, June 10, 1960).

It may also be observed that the influx of ministers from other denominations is not without its troubling aspects. I do not speak now of ministers who have come from the Netherlands — men who have in a sense accompanied their emigrating brethren and have come from the sister church to which we are intimately related. I think especially of the 22 ministers who have since 1950 come into our church from other churches in the United States. Can we be at ease when we consider that we must live by taking from the ministry of other churches in our land, needy churches before whom stands the same urgency to bring the Gospel of Christ to America? It may seem to be a compliment to us when ministers wish to come into our denomination from other churches. It is questionable whether we ought to be happy about it either for their sakes or ours. On this matter, Prof. Dekker has observed: "There are more ministers in other denominations who will readily accept calls to our churches. But . . . let us realize that when we take ministers from other denominations we are really acting as ecclesiastical parasites, hardly an honorable form of existence at any time, and certainly not when there is a shortage of 25,000 ministers in the United States. Then, too, let us realize that some ministers coming from other circles, perhaps not knowing us well, have an inclination to dispute our heritage and to foster fractious controversies among us" (*The Banner*, June 10, 1960).

There would be no happier situation than to find that the remarkable external growth of our church were accompanied by a growth in the number of consecrated young people who offer themselves to the special service of the Lord at such a time as this. Let us remember that the people of God have

from the beginning been called not only *to receive* but especially *to be* a blessing. We need to give attention, therefore, not only to what comes into our homes and churches, but also to what goes out from them. May God give us more sons and daughters enriched with His grace in such a way that they will respond to the call to go forth into His service.

It is Lent, the season in which we contemplate the grace of the Lord Jesus, "who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." This has meaning not only for what we receive but for what we become and do. "Whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister." Is there anything better or greater to which to aspire?

# Mission Work Today

*by Harry R. Boer*

THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE *Journal* FINDS its editors in a prospective mood while unable to restrain retrospective glances. The present is always that moment of time where past and future meet. Yesterday is long, tomorrow may be longer, and the present moment is always a ceasing to be and a becoming. Of nothing is this more true than of the missionary enterprise of the Church. So much has been done, so much remains to be done. The Gospel is unchanging and eternal; the frameworks within which, the methods by which, and the men through which it is proclaimed vary with the changes and vicissitudes of history. Our day is a turbulent one. Our generation sees more revolutionary change in a decade than men before us saw in centuries. Over it all the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ reigns supreme and serene. But He does speak to us in the history that unfolds under His providence. What is He saying to us in the present process of change in the mission situation? What adaptations must be made, what sacrifices undertaken, what old paths must be left, what new ones entered?

To canvass the whole area of missionary activity requires far wider acquaintance with it than I have and more space than is available. Let us therefore consider at some length a specific aspect of mission activity that has perhaps more than any other engaged the attention of our denominaton — the Christian Reformed — in the years that lie immediately behind us. I refer to what is known as the indigenous mission method. What was it in its origins? How has it changed? What is its future role? I should like to consider the subject largely though not exclusively from the vantage point of our experience on our Northern Nigeria mission field in which it is my privilege to serve.

SINCE THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH ASSUMED responsibility for a mission area in Northern Nigeria in 1939, the term "indigenous missions" has become a meaningful one in our denomination. There was good reason for this. Up to the time that we entered Nigeria, we had had two large fields to which a great deal of money and dedication had been given. One of these was the Indian field in the western United States, the other the work in China. Neither field had been outstandingly fruitful from the viewpoint of converts gained and churches established. It might perhaps even be said that neither field had in a really significant sense captured the imagination of the Church as a whole. Support was gladly given, men and women gave their lives to the work, but we did not seem to be really "excited" about it all. There seemed to be in the church an inarticulate yearning for missionary expression that would lead to large and visible transformations in the areas touched and especially to the emergence of a large and growing church.

This desire was realized almost beyond expectation in the work that we began to undertake in Nigeria in 1939. Our assumption of that work had substantial roots in unofficial previous association with the British branch of the Sudan United Mission from which the field was transferred to us. There had been an American committee of the Sudan United Mission, of which Dr. J. T. Hoogstra had been a member and Rev. J. Beebe the secretary. Five Christian Reformed ladies had entered the service of the Sudan United Mission. They were the Misses Johanna Veenstra, Nelle Breen, Bertha Zagers, Jennie Stielstra and Tena Huizenga. The relationship with the Sudan United Mission was further strengthened when Miss Breen married Edgar H. Smith of the British branch of the S.U.M. who was subsequently ordained as a minister in the Christian Reformed Church. They are today by far our oldest missionary veterans on the Nigerian field.

The appeal of the field, apart from the inevitable romanticism of working in the mysterious "dark continent," lay in no small measure in two other and more important considerations. One was the fact that here converts were being gained and baptized in large numbers and a church was clearly emerging. The other was the fact that the "indigenous method" of mission work was being followed. This method might be roughly described as making the emerging church conduct all its activities within the limits of its own resources. This involved church-sponsored evangelism and the fostering of self-government. Hence the "indigenous" church, that

is, the church rooted, as it were, in its own soil, popularly described by the three selves: self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing.

This method, in turn, had roots in British missionary thinking. Such veterans of the Sudan United Mission as Messrs. Dawson, Cooper, Farrant, and Bristow had been deeply influenced by the mission policies advocated by Roland Allen. Allen's central thesis was that the Church of Christ receives its sufficiency from the Holy Spirit. It should therefore stand on its own feet. He was averse to all missionary paternalism. He hoped the day would come (he was thinking especially of his observations in China) when the Church would condemn missions by money as it now condemns missions by the sword. It is to be feared that Allen's theological principle was often obscured in the minds of many by the method to which it rightly leads, but it cannot be gainsaid that in and outside of Britain his concept of missions has had a powerful influence. It is to this concept that the Christian Reformed Church fell heir when in 1939 it assumed official responsibility for the Lupwe-Takum area in Benue Province, Northern Nigeria.

From the beginning the Nigerian field has had a large place not only in the affection but also in the imagination of the Christian Reformed Church. With appreciation for the field there soon followed appreciation for the mission method pursued on it. Our whole understanding of missions has been influenced by it, and in various degrees it has led to a re-evaluation of all other mission work in which we are engaged, even in the field of home missions.

The appreciation was perhaps not always as critical as it might have been. A method that required perception in application often tended (and still tends) to become a convenient slogan for justifying any desired missionary end. When a particular mission cause was pleaded, whether in the church at large or in a Board meeting or at Synod, the burden of proof was easily put on the opposition by maintaining that this project was "indigenous." It would not be difficult to find official decisions relating to matters that were not overly indigenous on the face of them which had as ground some such expression as "this would be in line with indigenous mission policy."

FROM 1940 TO ROUGHLY 1950 IT WAS NOT DIFFICULT to keep the indigenous method in its application on the Nigerian field "pure and undefiled." The first missionaries from our church to be sent to Nigeria in the 1940s went one by one; they were easily absorbed into the spirit and method of the indigenous approach and they were, moreover, to a large extent sent out to do work in the specifically evangelistic outreach of the mission, which lends itself most readily to the application of the principles of self-support, self-propagation and self-government. Even the medical and the educational work that was done was of such simple nature (dispensary work and primary education) that it could be carried on to a large extent with resources found on the field. Government lent some aid in these areas, it is true, but, since the money did not come from the Christian Reformed Church but from Nigerian sources, it was not felt that any prejudice was done to the indigenous method by accepting such aid.

In the decade of the 1950s, however, the indigenous method of doing mission work, in the elementary form in which it had up to then obtained, was put under considerable strain. The life of the missionaries themselves began gradually to lose some of the primitive and simple character that had up to then stamped it. Builders came to construct houses and buildings; African workers were increasingly engaged on mission wages, cars appeared in increasing numbers, refrigerators came to bring a little cold relief in the tropics. At present we even have intra-field radio communication and airplane transportation. These were not luxuries or extravagances, but necessities which the developing mission and Nigerian situation as a whole thrust upon us. Nevertheless, it is difficult to lose simplicity in one sector and keep it in all others. We changed with Africa and Africa changed with us. With extensive mission funds we built a large and beautiful hospital in Takum; here and there mission funds were used in dispensary work; a new hospital in the Tiv area is now under serious consideration; a large government grant is being supplemented by mission funds to build a secondary school for boys; the theological seminary (TCNN) now being constructed at Bukuru is being financed by seven supporting missions; scholarships for students in various kinds of study are being made available; the income from medical fees no longer covers running and maintenance expenses in the medical work; a large lay evangelistic training program in Tiv country promises eventually to involve a considerable mission investment. And so one can go on.

These developments in Nigeria were accompanied in Japan by mission-financed chapel construction, and on the Indian field by the expansion of school facilities after a period of status quo. In home-mission work the question of whether chapels should be built before self-supporting congregations are formed has been answered in the affirmative. On all fronts there seems to be retreat from a principle that has done much to make our church much more mission conscious and missionarily effective than we were before it came to mold our missionary thinking.

HAS THE PRINCIPLE OF INDIGENEITY BEEN ABANdoned? Was it a valuable and usable method when mission work was in its infancy but quite unusable when the situation became more complex? Has it

no meaning for home missions? Appearances would seem to indicate this, but it would be unfortunate in the extreme if appearances were allowed to obscure the thing that indigenous mission work most profoundly represents.

Speaking for Nigeria, from which the idea of indigenous missions first seriously entered into our church's thinking, it must be noted that its first reference was to the emerging *Church*. It was in the first place a method of *evangelism* and *Church building*. As such it is still not only in effect but it remains effective. The salaries of pastors and evangelists, the building and maintenance of church structures is to this day the responsibility of the African Church. In the conducting of Church affairs the missionary is at most an advisor, and countless Church council meetings are held in our churches and in the churches coming out of Sudan United Mission work as a whole at which a missionary is not even present. Most people who are won to Christ in the Sudan today are won through the efforts of the Church, not through the mission. These are matters of great moment. They represent the achievement of long and deeply cherished ends.

In the rapidly developing and complex situation which confronts us in Nigeria we have had to recognize, however, that the Church does not and indeed cannot stand alone. Her life is inextricably bound up with the social and economic life of the society in which she lives and witnesses. If the Nigerian Church is to hold her own and advance, if she is not in the public mind to be relegated to a side street on the highway of national progress and achievement, if she is to address meaningfully the many detribalized but more or less educated and secularized young people coming out of the government schools, if she is to build her own life culturally and intellectually as well as spiritually, then there must be provided for her a supporting framework which will enable her to receive and develop these qualities. For this reason education is today as necessary a part of Church progress as mission evangelism formerly was in Church founding.

This need is clearly demonstrated in the field of theological education. There is today a well-nigh universal recognition that theological training must go forward "with all deliberate speed." This recognition arises not only from the fact that the future of Christian missions is in many lands of uncertain duration. It would be as necessary if this uncertainty did not exist. The necessity of theological training is laid upon Church and mission by the fact that the Church is no longer a bush Church. The Church is, thank God, still serving faithfully in the bush. But she is no longer serving *only* in the bush. She stands where men traffic in commerce, where the issues of national and international politics are discussed, where universities and high schools offer increasingly broader horizons, where science has replaced magic and sorcery as the looked to master over the forces and dangers of nature. The Church, and particularly the Christian pastor, must be able to break the bread of life to men in these situations and in these contexts. Theological training cannot, however, undertake its task except on the basis of a prior general education. Areas in which such education has not been given in the past are at a serious disadvantage in achieving the kind of Church development that is needed in the contemporary situation.

Theological education is a marked, but actually only one, example of the need for Christian education that now exists. If the Church must speak to the world, her sons and daughters must live and witness in the world. There must be Christian teachers in the schools, Christian nurses and doctors in the hospitals, Christian scientists in the laboratories, Christian business men in the banks, in the railroads and in the large commercial enterprises, Christian spokesmen in the nation's political forums. If we do not want to risk the loss of this kind of Church membership by surrendering students to an essentially neutral education, then Christian education is a highly important need of the hour.

This education, it must be emphasized, is not undertaken for cultural and academic ends simply, though it certainly cannot be undertaken without them. It envisions, as its most important end, the forming of Christian character and the strengthening of the Christian Church and community. Were this effort to be undertaken without the existence of a Christian Church and community, its value would be dubious indeed. The products of the schools would then evaporate into the general life of the country, would not receive the continual renewal of their spiritual resources which the ministration of the Word and the Sacraments provides, and would in turn not be able to strengthen with their talents and services the Church which has now been brought into being. The experience of the Christian mission in China, which paid so much attention to institutional work and so little to the Church, must ever be a sober reminder of the need for correlating Church and culture.

The point that we wish to make in this discussion of education in connection with indigenous mission work is that the Nigerian Church is quite unable to shoulder the responsibility for this education. At present it must largely, especially on the levels of teacher training and secondary education, be provided for her. Not only are men and women needed, but also money. Education in the lands of the younger churches is no longer a mud-hut affair. We teach in schools that meet increasingly stringent government specifications, or we do not teach.

A similar situation exists with respect to medical work, but limitations of space forbids its elaboration. Other services, too, may be required from us

as time goes on. I think particularly of the usefulness to which agriculturists could be put in teaching better stewardship of the soil and more effective methods of animal husbandry in the largely agrarian situation in which most mission work today finds itself.

WHEN WE CONSIDER ALL THESE FACTORS, TO WHAT conclusions are we brought regarding indigenous mission work? I should like to suggest the following:

(1) The expression "indigenous mission work" must cease to be what it has too much become — an uncritical slogan or a rule of thumb. The situation on the field has become too complex to approve a given undertaking because it is "indigenous" or disapprove of it because it is "not indigenous." On the field and at home we would do well to surrennder the kind of oversimplification of which we have too often made ourselves guilty.

(2) The idea of indigenous mission work must again become for us what it was in the beginning, namely, *a deeply apprehended principle of missionary action.* This principle involves most importantly that the developing Christian Church and community shall be expected to do all that they can possibly do to realize the ends that Church, community, and mission have in view. Only on this basis can we be mutually respecting partners.

(3) Institutional mission work will become the dominant form of missionary service. As time goes on the ordained missionary's role will decrease and the role of educational, medical, and other personnel will increase. This points to two things: measurable achievement in the attainment of the ideal of the indigenous Church, and the continuing need to extend mission help in buttressing the Christian impact on the social structure within which the Church must express its daily life and witness.

(4) Mission budgets will not decrease but will increase. The compensating consideration here is that the mission in taking initiative and responsibility for the more academic and technical side of the younger Church's life will increasingly clear the way for the Church's assumption of responsibility for areas that were once wholly the mission's responsibility. Primary education is now almost wholly in African hands. Secondary education and teacher training will make large strides in that direction in the decade now before us. At what point the frontiers cease where missionary pioneering is called for no one can say. It is interesting to observe at this point that the Southern Baptists have launched a program for establishing a Christian university in the Western Region of Nigeria.

(5) Assistance to the younger Church must be evaluated in terms of the consideration whether proposed assistance will help her to stand more firmly on her own feet. Sentimental hand-outs are not only out of order, they are a positive menace to the development of self-reliance. But large aid given in strategic areas may be of the essence of missionary wisdom.

(6) Planning for the future must more and more become what it already is, a joint Church-mission responsibility. This raises an important question that must be considered with the greatest sympathy and understanding by all parties, namely, the relationship between the mission on the field and the church authorities at home. In the unilateral situation that used to exist, the sending church could both propose and dispose. Now there is a partner in all planning over whom neither the mission nor the Board has any authority. The mission must be able to speak with confidence to the Church with whom it works while at the same time realizing that the Board has commitments not in one place only but in many. The Board, on the other hand, must realize that any other than the most careful consideration of Church-mission planning could easily lead to an immobilization of missionary initiative.

(7) The centripetal forces inherent in all education, leading young men and women to seek satisfactory employment in distant areas, notably in the cities, if they cannot find it in their own communities, make it imperative to provide spiritual care of high quality in the centers of population. This has not been sufficiently done up to the present time. When it is undertaken, however, it will have to be done in conjunction with other churches and missions or be foredoomed to failure.

(8) Missionary paternalism must follow the way of secular colonialism and come to an end. Authority is no longer the mission's alone or even primarily. Our providing the men and the money may not in the community of the kingdom of God lead us to lord it over the Church of Christ that has come into being. We must disavow the too often heard axiom, "If we provide the resources we must have the say." We are called in the deepest sense of the word to *communion* not only in faith and confession but also in work and in planning.

(9) The price of refusing to recognize the new day that is upon us is alienation between Church and mission, and personal missionary embitterment and frustration. Perceptive missionaries who see the need of adjustment to the new situation but who cannot honestly enter into its spirit or bear what may at times seem to be arrogance in church leaders can render the climaxing service of their career by the self-sacrificial act of retiring from the field. This is not written in sarcasm but in deep and sympathetic seriousness.

(10) The changing times take place within the providence of an unchanging Lord. How much He has been pleased to do through the faulty instrumentality of His servants! How vast the difference

etween the Africa of 1900 and 1961! As the pioeer bands that entered pagan Africa did not fear he dark forces with which they grappled, let us not ear the new problems that now confront us. Many f the problems with which we have now to deal rise out of the success with which the Lord has blessed our witness. To have them is an opportunity. Not to have them would be a tragedy. And the challenge and the problems that arise from areas yet to be conquered for Christ, we will go to meet with His unfailing promise: I am with you to the end of the age.

## Responses to Easter

(*Continued from page* 3)

itoned vicariously for our sins and the Lord who rose, who triumphed, who conquered, who insured the meaning of ife, and who made eternal life possible.

THE MESSAGE OF THE RESURRECTION has also proved an inspiration to artists throughout the Christian era, though less so now than previously. Painters, architects, and poets have tried repeatedly to explore artistically the implications of the Lord's conquest over death. Medieval drama, for example, the seedbed for all of modern drama, arose in the church service, as a simple exchange of dialogue between members of the choir who briefly impersonated the angels and the women at the tomb. Poets and other writers have exhibited in word and song the truths that Christ's resurrection is a proof of His divinity, a hope of life everlasting, and a challenge to live fully out of the new principle of life. They have developed and amplified repeatedly Paul's admonition that one must die to self, crucify the sinful nature which he has inherited as a child of Adam, and experience a resurrection of the soul. Other poets have used the resurrection as an occasion to argue against detractors of flesh and the physical, to assert that the body is important, that what God had called good and what Christ chose to honor through His incarnation and resurrection must not, through misplaced piety, be denied its value. Others have worked with the motif that the Son of God, who was Himself raised, will some day, in turn, raise mankind at the last judgment.

AGAIN, IN MANY WAYS, AND IN MANY forms, poets, painters, and illustrators have worked with metaphor and simile to enrich the meaning of the resurrection. Thus, Samson, carrying away the gates of Gaza, and Jonah, spewed forth from the whale, have been regarded as anticipating the resurrection of Christ. The parallel between the cold tomb in which Christ was buried and the stony heart of sinners is common. The crown of thorns, it is pointed out, is transformed through the resurrection into the crown of glory. Also, much is made of the change from the Sabbath to Sunday, and Sunday is regarded as a continual reminder of the resurrection and a symbol of eternal life.

IT IS ALSO OBSERVED THAT THE SPRING is an appropriate time to commemorate Easter, for nature serves as a meaningful backdrop to the spiritual renewal which the resurrection achieves. Every-


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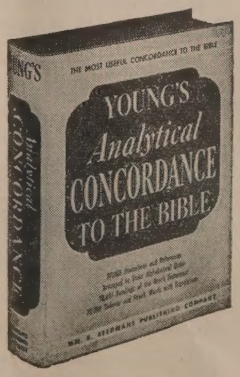


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where the Easter message is regarded as a proof, a hope, a challenge. One of the best known poems about Easter is George Herbert's "Easter." While recognizing ultimately the ineffable quality of this miracle, he attempts to make this reality concrete through a number of traditional motifs —

*EASTER*

*Rise heart; thy Lord is risen. Sing his praise*
*Without delayes,*
*Who takes thee by the hand, that thou likewise*
*With him mayst rise;*
*That, as his death calcined thee to dust,*
*His life may make thee gold, and much more, just.*

*Awake, my lute, and struggle for thy part*
*With all thy art.*
*The crosse taught all wood to resound his name,*
*Who bore the same.*
*His stretched sinews taught all strings, what key*
*Is best to celebrate this most high day.*

*Consort both heart and lute, and twist a song*
*Pleasant and long;*
*Or since all musick is but three parts vied*
*And multiplied;*
*O let thy blessed Spirit bear a part,*
*And make up our defects with his sweet art.*

*I got me flowers to straw thy way;*
*I got me boughs off many a tree:*
*But thou wast up by break of day,*
*And brought'st thy sweets along with thee.*

*The Sunne arising in the East,*
*Though he give light, and th' East perfume;*
*If they should offer to contest*
*With thy arising, they presume.*

*Can there be any day but this,*
*Though many sunnes to shine endeavour?*
*We count three hundred, but we misse:*
*There is but one, and that one ever.*

STEVE VANDER WEELE

# *Barabbas*

How did Barabbas feel? — the man for whom Christ died.

Pär Lagerkvist in *Barabbas* tells the story of the murderer who was freed when Christ was condemned to replace him on the cross.[1] This novel is not a new publication — it was published in Sweden in 1949 and translated into English in 1951 — but it is appropriate to speak of it at Easter time, for Barabbas was closely involved in the story of Christ's crucifixion.

Lagerkvist follows the story of Barabbas's life from the crucifixion on Calvary, through the years of groping for the truth, to his own death in Rome with the Christian martyrs. Never having known love, and having been brought up among thieves, Barabbas found the doctrine "Love one another" incomprehensible. Yet he was haunted by the image of the One who chose to die in his place. We do not know whether he died believing or still wanting to

1. *Barabbas* by Pär Lagerkvist. Translated by Alan Blair. Random House, 1951.


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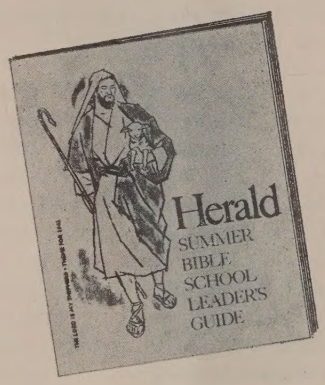


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elieve. The ending is ambiguous. When he felt death approaching, that hich he had always been so faraid of, e said out into the darkness, as though e were speaking to it: — To thee I eliver up my soul."

The early Christian era is described ith a selective realism more convincing nan any heavily detailed reconstruction f the past. The scenes have a reality nat recreate vividly the conditions in hich the new religion was born. It s interesting to see the emergence of hristian doctrine from the superstition nd bewilderment which were the first eaction of the people to the crucifixion.

The style is swift, sparing, and crystal lear. Although it is a translation, the tyle is hauntingly intense. It is austere, ared down to essentials, so that the piritual dilemma stands out with the harp lines of an etching. This is, as André Gide said, "a remarkable book."

Lagerkvist has long occupied a promiient position as poet and thinker in he world of Scandinavian letters. In 1951 he was awarded the Nobel Prize or Literature. His book *Barabbas* comines the utmost physical realism with n intensity of spiritual conflict that s seldom found in the retelling of Biblical tales.

This novel is not simply a recapituation of a religious story on the popuar level. It is the parable of a human oul. The narrative unfolds the spiritual lrama of a skeptic confronted with hrist's challenge, and it does so in erms peculiarly suggestive to the modrn mind. Lagerkvist's Barabbas, a onely man, haunted by the fear of leath, is a powerful symbol of today's lespairing man.

Despair has been called the key word hat best describes modern man. It is he cornerstone of the most vital of conemporary philosophies, with spokesnen as varied as Martin Buber and ean Paul Sartre. It has been most vivid-y expressed in the work of the literary rtists, for it is the artist who holds mirror to man and reflects his image. oets and novelists have expressed with ccuracy and insight the universality f this feeling of hopelessness and bsurdity.

It would be difficult to find a major vriter of our time who is unaffected y despair. Poets and dramatists deounce the uncontrollable absurdity of hings. The novelists are particularly expressive of this feeling of despair. There is Gide, Malraux, Moravia, Kafka, and Camus; there is Joyce, Huxley, Faulkner, and Orwell — to mention some of the outstanding literary names.

Despair is not necessarily a concomitant of atheism. As Miguel de Unamuno wrote in his *Tragic Sense of Life*, "Despair may be the basis of a vigorous life, of an efficacious activity, of an ethic, of an esthetic, of a religion and even of a logic." Despair can be a search for meaning, and it is better to face the terrible problem of man's predicament, even if it brings one to despair, than to remain blandly unaware, or superficially evasive. But the literature of despair is too complex a subject to discuss here.

I want now simply to draw a comparison between Barabbas and modern man. Acutely conscious of the inevitability of death, haunted by the fear of it, Barabbas wanted to believe the teachings of the Man, but could not. For different reasons, modern man finds it impossible to believe. Alienated and alone, he wanders aimlessly through a succession of events, or plunges feverishly into purposeless activity. Some, like Albert Camus, accept the condition of absurdity with great courage, and even build it into a positive creed. But the dominant note in contemporary


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thinking is one of despair, for if the grave is the final end, then life is meaningless.

Life is not only meaningless, it is monstrous, without faith. George Orwell has written a story about a clergyman's daughter who lost her faith and finds that now there is nothing but "deadly emptiness" at the heart of things.[2]

> There was, she saw clearly, no possible substitute for faith; the pagan acceptance of life as sufficient to itself; no pantheistic cheer-up stuff, no pseudo-religion of "Progress" . . . . Either life on earth is preparation for something greater and more lasting, or it is meaningless, dark and dreadful.

She reflects that all over the world there were thousands, millions of "people who had lost their faith without losing their need of faith." And faith, it seemed to her, was the only thing that really mattered.

> Given only faith how can anything else matter? How can anything dismay you if only there is some purpose in the world which you can serve, and which, while serving it, you can understand? Your whole life is illumined by that sense of purpose. There is no weariness in your heart, no doubts, no feeling of futility . . . . Every act is significant, every moment sanctified, woven by faith as into a pattern . . . .

It is the feeling of futility, the lack of significance, the sense of meaninglessness that makes life unbearable. One can endure anything if only one feels there is a purpose behind it. Albert Camus, to mention this influential writer again, has written these lines in his play *Caligula*:

> To lose one's life is a little thing and I shall have the courage to do it if necessary; but to see the meaning of life dissipated, to see our reason for existence disappear, that is what is unbearable. One cannot live without meaning.

This is the problem that faces man today: how to live in a world that has no meaning. Faith has disappeared, but the need for faith remains. Man can find no substitute, no matter how desperately he may search.

Barabbas in Lagerkvist's book was haunted by the need for faith and tormented by his inability to believe. He could not accept the teachings of the Man; he could not find the serenity that triumphs over despair which Sahek, his fellow slave who accepted the Master with childlike faith, found.

The question Barabbas faced is the question that Peter faced: "Whom say ye that I am?" It is the question that all of us face.

How did Barabbas feel? Look in your heart, O man. For you are Barabbas. I am Barabbas — the one for whom Christ died. MILDRED ZYLSTRA

2. *A Clergyman's Daughter* by George Orwell. Published in 1935, reprinted in 1960, by Harcourt, Brace.

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